

# Protecting the ICC and Upholding Victims' Rights Amid Crises and Threats

FIDH Recommendations to the ICC Assembly of States Parties, 2 - 7 December 2024

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# ICC in 2024: a year marked with progress & intensifying threats

The 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Assembly of State Parties (ASP) to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC or “the Court”) will take place in The Hague, Netherlands, from 2 to 7 December 2024. The Court’s governing body will address key issues, including elections for the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund for Victims and the Committee on Budget and Finance, adoption of the 2025 budget, and proposed amendments to the Rome Statute, including on the crime of aggression and slavery crimes.

This year’s ASP takes place against the backdrop of a world in crisis, marked by an alarming intensification of hostilities and increase in severe human rights violations across various regions. From ongoing armed conflicts in Palestine, Sudan, and Ukraine to escalating repression in Afghanistan and Venezuela, these situations show a growing pattern of shocking disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law and the resulting atrocities. The stakes are higher than ever, as this year’s ASP discussions focus on the need for accountability and justice for victims of Rome Statute crimes, with States Parties grappling with how to strengthen ICC and domestic capacities to address these urgent challenges.

In Palestine, Israeli attacks have resulted in over [43,000 deaths](#), thousands missing, and more than [100,000 injured](#), most of them women and children. The conflict has also spread to Lebanon, with Israeli airstrikes targeting the country since 23 September 2024. According to the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health, these strikes have killed over [3,500 people](#) and wounded more than [15,000](#) to date. In Venezuela, protests against President Maduro’s re-election were met with [brutal repression](#), leaving 22 dead, with the president threatening to add to the death toll. Opposition groups are also facing persecution on political grounds for, among other things, condemning the crackdown on protesters and election fraud, which a UN Fact-Finding Mission recently reported amounts to [crimes against humanity](#).

In Sudan, since the start of the conflict in April 2023, over [8 million](#) people have been internally displaced and more than [2.4 million](#) have fled the country, as fighting intensifies and famine worsens. The UN has reported [large-scale violations](#), including conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, and potential war crimes committed by all parties. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the [Taliban’s draconian policies](#) have led to widespread abuses, particularly against women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and ethnic and religious minorities.

As these crises continue to unfold before our eyes, it becomes imperative to address the systemic factors contributing to this deterioration of human rights and to seek effective solutions that prioritise the protection of vulnerable populations.

Even in the face of these global crises, several milestones have been achieved within the ICC framework this year, signalling renewed trust and commitment to uphold justice and accountability. Most notably, [Armenia](#) and [Ukraine](#) ratified the Rome Statute, expanding the ICC’s reach to support justice for victims globally. Many legal and political hurdles had to be overcome, making these ratifications all the more significant and bringing us closer to a universal Rome Statute, one that enables access to justice to all victims of grave crimes no matter their nationality, race, or the locations of the atrocities. However, when ratifying the Rome Statute, Ukraine made a declaration under Article 124 of the Rome Statute, denying ICC jurisdiction over war crimes committed by Ukrainian nationals for seven years after the entry into force of the ratification. This constitutes a regrettable limitation to the jurisdiction of the Court and a significant barrier to the fight against impunity.

Recent updates from the ICC also include the issuance of [four new arrest warrants](#) in the Ukraine situation as well as the [unsealing of six warrants](#) in the Libya situation. In addition, this year, the Court held its first in absentia confirmation of charges hearing against [Joseph Kony](#), a significant development for the victims in the Uganda situation who have been awaiting justice for 18 years.



Moreover, for the first time in the Mali situation, the ICC convicted [Al Hassan](#), former chief of the Timbuktu Islamic Police, of war crimes and crimes against humanity, [sentencing](#) him to 10 years of imprisonment. Despite the [absence of gender-based crimes among the convictions](#), this is the first ICC case litigating crimes committed in northern Mali, marking an important step towards justice and accountability for mass atrocities committed in the country.

Additionally, reparations proceedings in the Katanga case concluded in April with a [symbolic ceremony](#) held in Bunia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, attended by over 200 beneficiaries. This marks the first time in ICC history that reparations ordered by the judges are fully implemented. Similarly, the reparations awarded to the victims of crimes committed by Dominic Ongwen represent a significant step forward in justice for victims, as this is the Court's largest reparations order to date, totalling [€52,429,000 for 49,772 victims](#). FIDH welcomes this important milestone, as it acknowledges the profound harms caused by Ongwen's crimes and reinforces the rights of victims to reparations under the Rome Statute.

Further, the ICC [Registry's current review](#) of its 2012 victims' strategy is a promising step towards improving support for victims and upholding their [Rome Statute rights](#). This review process offers a unique opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the 2012 strategy and engage in meaningful consultations with victims, survivors, Court staff, and civil society on the current approach to and state of victims' rights at the Court and the practical measures needed to effectively uphold them.

The continued development of policies by the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) also contributes to strengthening the Court's framework. Recently, the OTP has expanded public consultations on new policies, including those relating to [slavery crimes](#), [environmental crimes](#), [complementarity and cooperation](#), and [gender persecution](#), enabling civil society organisations (CSOs) to provide expert advice and valuable input on various thematic areas, which help shape and improve the Court's practices and approaches.

However, the ICC continues to face significant challenges that hinder its ability to effectively carry out its mandate. This includes the lack of direct access to several situations under investigation, which limits the Court's ability to gather evidence and engage with affected communities. Persistent non-cooperation by some states further obstructs its operations, while political interference also remains a serious issue, as certain states persistently exert pressure that can compromise the Court's independence and impartiality. Moreover, the ICC has encountered threats and attacks directed at its personnel, undermining the safety and security of those working to uphold justice. Internally, the Court is also facing chronic workplace culture challenges, including recent allegations of sexual harassment against the ICC Prosecutor, with the ASP Presidency seeking an [external investigation](#) into the matter, and experts calling for him to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. Collectively, these obstacles not only hamper the pursuit of justice but also threaten the credibility of the ICC in addressing grave international crimes.

This paper, based on close monitoring of the ICC by FIDH and its member organisations throughout the year, presents three key recommendations to States Parties at the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the ASP on strengthening and protecting the Court's operations, the Rome Statute system, and victim-centred justice at the ICC.

# 1. Stand up and defend the ICC and HRDs

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in threats and attacks against the Court both in terms of its personnel and as an institution. These external threats are compounded by an internal workplace culture crisis, which undermines the Court's credibility and operational effectiveness. These threats and attacks must be urgently addressed, as inaction could bring the ICC's operations to a standstill. We have also witnessed an unprecedented increase in threats and attacks targeting civil society and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), including those working in ICC situation countries.

## 1.1. External threats to the ICC - sanctions, espionage, arrest warrants

While the ICC has legal, operational, and diplomatic safeguards to protect its independence and ensure it can carry out its mandate, these are being fiercely contested by powerful states including the United States (US), Israel, and Russia. The [Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act](#), passed in the US House of Representatives on 4 June 2024 with a [247-155 vote](#), seeks to impose sanctions on the ICC for "any effort to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute any protected person of the United States and its allies." The bill maliciously targets the Court's staff and judges, their families, and all people collaborating with the Court including witnesses, CSOs, and experts supporting the investigation of Israeli nationals. It also seeks to sanction commercial operators which provide essential services to the Court such as banks, insurances, and key contractors, which would greatly endanger the ability of the Court to function. It is now under consideration in the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, pending further action, and with Trump's recent election, it is expected to pass in the near future.

In May of this year, an investigation by *The Guardian* and the Israeli newspapers *+972* and *Local Call* uncovered that Israel has been [spying on the Court](#) for almost a decade, since Palestine's accession to the ICC in 2015. According to *The Guardian* investigation, Israel's intelligence agencies engaged in a range of tactics, including surveillance, hacking, and smear campaigns, as well as allegedly threatening senior ICC staff in order to undermine the Court's operations. The Israeli surveillance system has been "capturing the communications of numerous ICC officials", including former Prosecutor Bensouda and Prosecutor Khan, "intercepting phone calls, messages, emails and documents".

In September 2023, a [cyberattack](#) penetrated the ICC's system and targeted key elements of its operations. The Court described the incident as "a targeted and sophisticated attack with the objective of espionage" that can "be interpreted as a serious attempt to undermine the Court's mandate." As part of a broader investigation into potential threats, the Court also highlighted the possibility of disinformation campaigns being launched against the ICC and its officials, aimed at tarnishing its reputation and delegitimising its work. The Court also faced a failed attempt by a Russian military intelligence agent to infiltrate its staff by posing as an [intern](#).

Russia further escalated its attacks on the ICC by [opening criminal cases](#) against several ICC high officials, including ICC President Tomoko Akane and former ICC Vice President Piotr Hofmański, Prosecutor Karim Khan, judges Luz del Carmen Ibáñez Carranza, Rosario Salvatore Aitala, Sergio Gerardo Ugalde Godínez, and former judge Bertram Schmitt, placing them on its [wanted list](#). More recently, in November 2024, it ordered the arrest in absentia of two additional ICC officials, [Judge Haykel Ben Mahfoudh](#) and [Vice President Reine Alapini-Gansou](#). These aggressive actions are a direct retaliation for the Court's decision to issue [arrest warrants](#) against Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia's Children's Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova for the alleged unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children, as well as against other Russian officials for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity. In March 2023, Russian official Dmitry Medvedev [threatened](#) to target ICC headquarters in The Hague, saying it is "quite possible to imagine a hypersonic missile being fired from the North Sea by a Russian ship against the Hague courthouse" and warning ICC staff to "look carefully at the sky".

Inaction to protect the ICC from these threats and attacks would have severe implications. The proposed US sanctions could severely undermine the ICC's ability to function by cutting it off from the global financial system, blocking access to banking services, halting operations, and preventing the protection of witnesses, thus rendering it inoperative. If the sanctions are fully implemented the

Court will be forced to shut down. This is especially problematic because the US is not a State Party to the Rome Statute, demonstrating the Court's vulnerability to political attacks stemming from powerful external actors. Beyond the direct impact on the Court's operations, the sanctions would also compromise the general security of the Court and affect the well-being of its staff and anyone collaborating with the Court (intermediaries, CSOs, HRDs, etc.). The ongoing attacks and threats are setting a dangerous precedent for how the Court can be undermined, making it imperative to act now to defend its integrity. The stakes are high, not just for the ICC's credibility but also for the victims of Rome Statute crimes, who risk losing access to justice if the Court is politicised to the point of shutting down.

### ***What measures can ICC States Parties take to safeguard the ICC from external threats?***

Amid escalating threats against the Court by powerful states, it is crucial for ICC States Parties to take a strong and united stand in support of the Court and reaffirm their commitment to justice for victims of Rome Statute crimes. This includes cooperating with the Court, advocating for its independent mandate, and taking concrete measures to counter threats such as the pending US "Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act". These actions are essential not only to shield the Court from attacks but also to stand in solidarity with victims of atrocities.

The June 2024 [joint statement](#) by 93 ICC States Parties underscoring the importance of protecting the Court against interference and threats marked a positive step. Building on this, States Parties must issue strong, coordinated public and diplomatic statements reaffirming the ICC's mandate and condemning sanctions and threats. They should proactively challenge actions that undermine international criminal justice and victims' access to justice, ensuring opponents face unified resistance. Such unified support is essential to maintaining the Court's operations, ensuring the safety of its staff and collaborators, and protecting the integrity of international justice, while reinforcing the ICC's critical role within the international legal framework.

In particular, FIDH has [called for EU States](#) to "counter the planned US extraterritorial sanctions and make it clear that the ICC's independence is non-negotiable", stating that it "would send a strong political message that EU countries will not tolerate efforts to undermine the Court" and urging all EU countries to support updating the [EU Blocking Statute](#) to counter these threats. Governments should also look into national-level blocking statutes to provide additional layers of legal protection and increase diplomatic engagement to oppose threats and sanctions, and publicly reaffirm their support for the ICC through unified, high-level statements.

Additionally, to effectively protect the ICC from future attacks, especially cyberattacks and espionage, additional resources are urgently needed. The Court requires a substantial investment in preventive measures, particularly in cybersecurity infrastructure, to defend itself against well-funded state actors. Stronger security infrastructures are essential to ensure the Court's resilience when faced with these types of threats and attacks and to maintain its ability to deliver justice without interference.

In addition to diplomacy and adequate resources, legal action is crucial to safeguarding the Court's integrity. The alarming allegations of a nine-year campaign by Israeli intelligence agencies to undermine the ICC's investigations in Palestine should be investigated by the ICC OTP as potential [offences against the administration of justice](#) under Article 70 of the Rome Statute. States Parties must also take domestic action, including criminal investigations where appropriate. For example, under Article 43 of the [Headquarters Agreement](#), the Netherlands is legally bound to ensure the security and protection of ICC officials, enabling the Court to operate "free from interference of any kind." In October 2024, 20 complainants filed a [criminal complaint](#) regarding the espionage allegations with the Dutch public prosecution service, which is now reviewing the case.

## Recommendations

To address critical external threats to the ICC, FIDH urges ICC States Parties to:

- **Advocate for diplomatic and public support** for the Court by issuing strong, unified statements reaffirming the ICC's mandate and condemning threats and sanctions that undermine its work.
- **Activate the EU Blocking Statute and similar national laws** to counter extraterritorial sanctions proposed in the US 'Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act'.
- **Approve funding for essential security measures in the ICC's Programme Budget for 2025**, including €4.3 million requested by the Registry for information technology and physical security measures to safeguard the Court's elected officials, personnel, premises and overall operations following the 2023 cyberattack.
- **Ratify and implement the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court (APIC)** to ensure comprehensive legal protections for all ICC officials, including former officials, by safeguarding their independence, immunity from legal processes for acts performed in their official capacity.
- **Pursue legal accountability avenues** by investigating crimes against the ICC and its officials domestically, where applicable, as illustrated by the Dutch prosecution service's review of espionage allegations against Israeli officials.

## 1.2 Threats to the ICC - internal workplace culture crisis

The ICC is also facing significant internal challenges that undermine its credibility, operational effectiveness, and capacity to uphold its mandate. Chief among these is a deteriorating workplace culture, as evidenced by multiple recent reports and surveys. Most recently, the ICC is grappling with [allegations of sexual harassment](#) against the Prosecutor, as well as [alleged attempts to suppress the claims](#), highlighting the importance of robust and impartial accountability mechanisms within the Court. These internal threats, while less visible than external challenges, are equally critical and demand urgent attention from States Parties. Addressing these issues is essential not only to ensure the ICC can remain focused on delivering justice for victims of Rome Statute crimes but also to provide its staff with a safe, inclusive, and supportive working environment.

The Independent Oversight Mechanism's [2023-2024 report](#) highlights numerous allegations of harassment and abuse of authority involving senior officials, exposing systemic weaknesses in internal accountability mechanisms, and casting doubts on the integrity of the Court's leadership. For example, 43 new allegations of misconduct were reported in the past year, with 25 advancing to formal cases. These figures reveal an alarming trend of unresolved misconduct within the Court. The September 2020 Independent Expert Review ([IER Report](#)) referred to a "culture of fear," sexual harassment, predatory behavior, and a workplace culture that is 'adversarial and implicitly discriminatory against women.'" Four years on, these systemic issues remain unresolved, highlighting the urgent need for decisive action to address them.

According to the [Report of the Court on Key Performance Indicators](#) published in March 2024: "Despite efforts to improve the working culture through the bottom-up approach for the Core Values project during 2022 and 2023, the results show that there is significant room for improvement at the Court." In a recent ICC staff survey, when asked if the ICC fosters "an open and honest culture," only 25% of staff strongly agreed. Alarming, 31% of staff reported experiencing discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or abuse of authority within the past year. In 2022, the percentage was 26%, and in 2021 was 19%. These large numbers and upward trend paint a grim picture of the ICC's workplace environment and suggest a failure to address deep-rooted workplace cultural issues.

This crisis not only damages the morale and well-being of ICC staff but also jeopardises the Court's ability to deliver justice. A workplace culture marred by discrimination and harassment hinders the retention of skilled professionals, compromises operational efficiency, and undermines public confidence in the institution's integrity. Furthermore, according to the latest ICC staff survey, 57% of staff expressed a lack of confidence in the ICC's ability to take allegations of discrimination, harassment,

sexual harassment, or abuse of authority seriously, highlighting widespread mistrust which diminishes the Court's moral authority.

Addressing the workplace culture crisis at the ICC is essential to safeguarding its credibility and fulfilling its mandate to prosecute the gravest crimes. As a global leader in justice, the ICC must reflect the principles of fairness and accountability it promotes. Recent reports highlight the urgent need for stronger internal investigation mechanisms and systemic reforms to tackle misconduct, power imbalances, and structural sexism. The current process for addressing allegations of elected officials is also unclear and ineffective. To resolve this the [IER report](#) recommended, for example, delegating complaints against Judges, the Prosecutor, and Deputy Prosecutor to ad hoc investigative panels, as well as establishing a Judicial Council of the Court, with a mandate over the discipline of judges, which has been endorsed by the [International Bar Association](#). By addressing these issues head-on, the Court can rebuild trust, protect its staff, and prevent adversaries from exploiting internal failings to undermine its mission. A more accountable and transparent ICC will reinforce trust and ensure it remains focused on delivering justice for victims.

We welcome the decision of the ASP Bureau to pursue an [external investigation](#) into the allegations of misconduct against the ICC Prosecutor. FIDH further supports calls for the Prosecutor to [step down](#) pending the outcome of the investigation to ensure the process is impartial, unhindered, and instils confidence in the Court's commitment to accountability, integrity, and the wellbeing of its staff. To ensure the investigation's legitimacy and independence, it is crucial that the chosen body is thoroughly vetted for conflicts of interest, operates independently of the ICC and the United Nations, and has demonstrated expertise in handling such sensitive matters. The investigation must be transparent, well-resourced, and conducted expeditiously to minimise distress for all parties and to maintain the Court's focus on its mandate. Comprehensive safeguards must be put in place to protect complainants, witnesses, and all those involved from retaliation while upholding the due process rights and presumption of innocence of the Prosecutor. By maintaining these standards, the investigation can reinforce confidence in the ICC's commitment to accountability and justice.

## Recommendations

To address critical internal threats to the ICC, FIDH urges ICC States Parties to:

- **Ensure an external, independent, and impartial investigation** is conducted into the current allegations of harassment against the ICC Prosecutor.
- **Support the call for the Prosecutor to step down** pending the outcome of the investigation to safeguard the integrity of the process, prevent undue influence, demonstrate the Court's commitment to impartiality and accountability, and provide a sense of security and support for staff affected by the allegations.
- **Conduct a comprehensive review** of the Court's legal framework for misconduct, the IOM's mandate, and systemic weaknesses to uncover root causes, patterns of abuse, power imbalances, and structural biases and sexism that undermine trust and integrity at the ICC.
- **Strengthen internal mechanisms** by reforming the legal and procedural framework to enable robust, transparent, and effective responses to misconduct, harassment, and abuse of authority, ensuring the ICC can uphold the principles it represents.
- **Delegate complaints against Judges, the Prosecutor, and Deputy Prosecutor** to ad hoc investigative panels and establish a Judicial Council with disciplinary authority over judges, as recommended by the IER experts.
- **Promote workplace cultural change** by prioritising structural reforms to address systemic sexism, entrenched power imbalances, and hierarchical practices that perpetuate a culture of impunity within the ICC.
- **Support staff effectively** by enhancing measures to protect victims of misconduct, improving reporting mechanisms, and fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive working environment to ensure staff morale and operational effectiveness.



## 1.3 Attacks against HRDs

The threats facing the ICC are part of a broader pattern of escalating attacks on justice and accountability efforts worldwide. In recent years, threats against civil society and HRDs have also [increased](#). CSOs and HRDs have long been [on the front lines](#) of the fight against impunity for international crimes and serious human rights violations, often at great personal risk. In many ICC situation countries, HRDs and their families face harassment, pressure, intimidation, and even criminalisation in an attempt to silence their voices and disrupt their advocacy on behalf of victims.

In situations like Palestine, HRDs [face huge challenges](#) in carrying out their work: they went “from documenting human rights violations and speaking out for victims, to becoming the targets of attacks themselves.” CSO offices have been bombed and several staff members and HRDs have been killed in Israeli attacks. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, [emphasised the gravity](#) of the situation, stating that “[t]here is literally no place left for human rights defenders and civil society actors to continue documenting the litany of human rights violations to which Israel is subjecting the people of the Gaza Strip.”

In Venezuela, the situation deteriorated following the recent elections, with opposition groups and CSOs facing [intensified persecution](#) for condemning electoral fraud and violence against protesters. [Government repression](#) has sharply escalated, particularly targeting political opponents and HRDs. In August, shortly after the elections, Venezuela enacted the [Law of Supervision, Regularisation, Performance, and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organisations](#) (Ley de Fiscalización, Regularización, Actuación y Financiamiento de las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales y Afines). This law mandates that NGOs disclose any foreign funding, which could lead to them being labelled as ‘foreign agents’. It is widely seen as a tool to further [restrict and criminalise](#) civil society including HRDs, posing a serious threat to freedom of association and the free and independent functioning of CSOs.

Since the Taliban’s takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021, threats against HRDs and civil society have intensified drastically, [especially for women](#) who have courageously led protests against the oppressive policies that have been put in place, despite the violence and persecution they face. HRDs who dare to express their opposition to the Taliban risk arbitrary arrest and detention, physical and sexual violence, torture and other ill-treatment, with repercussions often extending to their families. This creates a particularly vulnerable environment for HRDs and activists, who are targeted for their efforts to advocate for justice and human rights amidst an escalating climate of fear in the country.

These are just a few examples of the increasing threats and attacks against CSOs and HRDs worldwide. Failure to effectively deter such attacks could have devastating consequences. In fact, it could lead to increased persecution of HRDs, further reinforcing impunity for human rights violations and eroding victims’ trust in the international justice system. In turn, this would also damage the Court’s effectiveness, as it relies heavily on HRDs to access crucial information, connect with victims, and serve as intermediaries. Without their support, as often highlighted by Court officials, the ICC’s ability to investigate cases and maintain access to situations and victims would be greatly diminished, threatening its mandate to deliver justice.

### ***How can ICC States Parties defend HRDs?***

It is crucial for ICC States Parties to ensure the safety of HRDs so they can continue their vital work on behalf of victims and provide support to the ICC, reinforcing global justice and accountability. In response to threats against HRDs, in 2024 a coalition of human rights organisations, including FIDH, launched [Declaration+25](#), outlining key priorities for States to fully implement the original HRD Declaration and strengthen protections for HRDs worldwide.

States should fully endorse and implement the principles set out in the original Declaration on HRDs and in the Declaration+25, which calls on States to recognise and protect human rights defenders by fostering a safe environment, preventing criminalisation of their work, providing resources and digital security, and ensuring targeted protections in conflict settings, with robust implementation and monitoring mechanisms. States should also support and act on the Coalition for the ICC’s strong advocacy on this issue, including its call during the [Plenary on Cooperation](#) at last year’s ASP session for States Parties to condemn threats against HRDs advancing justice within the Rome Statute system,

and to strengthen domestic protection frameworks. It is essential that States consistently denounce the criminalisation, threats, and attacks faced by HRDs, who stand on the frontline of accountability efforts for core international crimes. FIDH urges all States to support the Coalition's efforts to defend HRDs, and strengthen national frameworks to ensure their safety.

## Recommendations

To protect HRDs, FIDH calls on ICC States Parties to:

- **Reaffirm their commitment to stronger international protections** of HRDs through public declarations and other visible measures to show solidarity with those on the frontline of accountability for core international crimes.
- **Fully endorse and implement the Declaration on HRDs and Declaration+25** by recognising and protecting HRDs, fostering safe environments, preventing criminalisation, ensuring digital security, and providing targeted protections in conflict settings, alongside robust monitoring mechanisms.
- **Condemn threats against HRDs** advancing justice in the Rome Statute system and to strengthen domestic frameworks for their protection.

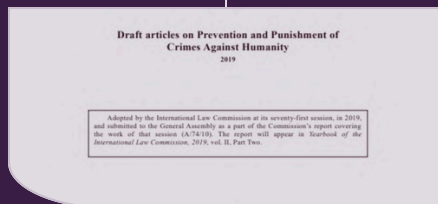
# JUSTICE IN ACTION

## Actions States can take to Champion and Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms



### Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) Treaty

Support and ratify the MLA Treaty to enhance state cooperation in investigating and prosecuting serious international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other grave violations. The treaty aims to provide a consistent and efficient framework with a multilateral, victim-oriented approach, replacing outdated bilateral arrangements.



### Crimes Against Humanity (CAH) Treaty

Support the negotiations and the adoption of the CAH Treaty, to include provisions on the prevention and punishment of crimes such as torture, enforced disappearances, and gender apartheid. This treaty would fill a gap in the international legal framework, providing a stronger basis for prosecuting such crimes.



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### Enforced Disappearances

Ratify, promote and implement the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. States should take measures to ensure accountability for this crime, including ratification and the adoption of national legislation to investigate, prosecute, and provide reparations for victims.



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### Reject Immunities and Amnesties for International Crimes

Challenge and reject the application of immunities for state officials accused of international crimes and oppose amnesties that shield perpetrators from accountability, ensuring justice is upheld irrespective of an individual's status or political agreements.



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### Gender Apartheid

Push for the explicit recognition of gender apartheid as a crime under international law to strengthen efforts to recognise and combat institutionalised oppression, discrimination, and violence imposed on the grounds of gender.



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### International Court of Justice Cases

Engage in, and support, cases before the ICJ that seek justice for international crimes and hold states accountable for breaches of international obligations, including human rights violations and genocide.

© Photo: Impunity Watch - Syrian survivors and victim associations at a demonstration against torture at the International Court of Justice, October 2023.

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## 2. Uphold Victims' Rome Statute Rights

At the ICC, victims are recognised as rights holders rather than mere witnesses, marking a significant shift that empowers them to actively participate in legal processes and assert their entitlements to justice and reparations: opportunities often absent in national systems. Central to the Court's mandate, [victims' rights](#) ensure that those most affected by atrocity crimes have a meaningful voice in proceedings, access to reparations, and recognition of their suffering. Upholding these rights is crucial not only for delivering justice but also for fostering healing, restoring dignity, and addressing the harm endured by survivors, reaffirming that accountability extends beyond punishing perpetrators to empowering and supporting victims.

To fulfil this mandate, the Court's jurisprudence stresses the importance for victim participation to be meaningful and not merely symbolic. Justice must be pursued not only *for* victims but also *with* them. Representatives from across the Court's offices have consistently highlighted the ICC's commitment to the inclusion of victims in the justice processes. Former ICC President Piotr Hofmański emphasised [this priority](#) on Human Rights Day in 2023, stating: "Victims are at the heart of the Court's proceedings and deserve justice. Through its work, the Court can help protect and uphold the rights of people to live in peace, equality and dignity." Similarly, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan has emphasised that his "primary and indeed [...] only objective must be to [achieve justice for the victims](#)," reinforcing the Court's responsibility to make victims' participation central to its mission.

Despite these public commitments, victims' rights under the Rome Statute often face significant obstacles, with some actors even seeking to undermine genuine inclusion. Victims frequently encounter barriers to exercising their rights, including restricted access to information during investigations and limited opportunities to participate meaningfully at various stages of proceedings. Persistent issues such as diminishing opportunities for participation, inadequate outreach, and insufficient support for legal representation continue to undermine the realisation of victims' rights. Additionally, neither the Rome Statute nor the Rules of Procedure and Evidence clearly defines the modalities of victim participation, leaving these decisions to the discretion of judges, resulting in inconsistent practices across different Chambers and cases.

A broad funding shortfall for victim-centred activities further hampers the ICC's ability to provide meaningful support to victims in all aspects, especially given the growing number of participating victims each year. This financial constraint threatens the Court's capacity to deliver effective justice, potentially leaving victims without the support they deserve.

### 2.1 Right to participate - early stages

The shrinking space for victim participation, particularly in the [early stages of ICC proceedings](#), is a pressing concern that undermines the Court's victim-centred mandate. The question of victims' participation during the investigation phase was first addressed by the Appeals Chamber in 2008, which [affirmed](#) that victims could engage in judicial proceedings at this stage if their personal interests were impacted, including initiating such proceedings. The Chamber highlighted examples such as victims requesting protective measures for their safety, well-being, or privacy. This issue was further clarified in several Pre-Trial Chamber decisions between 2010 and 2012 in the [Kenya, CAR I, DRC, Libya, Uganda](#) situations. While finding that victim applications would not typically be heard outside of a case, these decisions reiterated that victims could independently make submissions to a Pre-Trial Chamber at the situation level, including on the [victims' own initiative](#).

Since then, Pre-Trial Chambers have increasingly adopted a restrictive approach to victims' participation. This was evident in a 2023 decision by Pre-Trial Chamber I in the Bangladesh/Myanmar situation. Victims' legal representatives, supported by the Offices of Public Counsel for Victims ([OPCV](#)) and Defence ([OPCD](#)), requested a protocol to regulate activities during the investigation phase and sought access to confidential records, similar to what is granted in active cases. They were seeking to address troubling incidents, including a situation where a victim's request to have their lawyer present during a Prosecution meeting was denied, followed by the Prosecution's refusal to provide the meeting records to either the victim or their lawyer. Despite these serious concerns, Pre-Trial Chamber I declined to assess the substance of the request, [finding](#) that victims did not have the standing to submit it. This



decision undermines the principle that victims are rights holders under the Rome Statute, reducing their ability to participate meaningfully and eroding trust in the ICC's commitment to ensuring justice is pursued with victims, not just for them.

## 2.2 Right to information and outreach

Victims also have a right to be properly informed about matters affecting their interests under the Rome Statute and international law. Early outreach, recognised by the ASP and informed by lessons from ad hoc tribunals, is crucial from the outset of a preliminary examination. As [Pre-Trial Chamber I](#) noted in the Situation in the State of Palestine: "For the Court to be able to properly fulfil its mandate, it is imperative that its role and activities are properly understood and accessible, particularly to the victims of situations and cases before the Court. Outreach and public information activities in situation countries are quintessential to foster support, public understanding and confidence in the work of the Court."

However, there is a stark contrast between this recognition and the insufficient efforts to inform victims about their rights and the status of proceedings, leaving many unable to engage meaningfully and eroding their confidence in the Court. One major drawback in the Registry's outreach initiatives is that outreach activity does not start until a formal investigation has been opened. Even at the investigation stage, ICC outreach is extremely limited and victims and affected communities are often left in the dark. In the Palestine situation, for example, victims have "[overwhelmingly articulated](#) a wish for reassurance that the ICC investigation is progressing and an expectation to see the Court on the ground." Some Legal Representatives for Victims (LRVs) reiterated that "[in the eyes of their clients](#), the activities and system of interaction ordered in the Decision of 13 July 2018 have not yet satisfactorily materialised", as the public information and outreach activities reported by the Registry 'do not appear so far to have reached any of [their] clients in Palestine.'" In their words, now, more than ever, victims are "looking for the Court to make itself known, felt and present in Palestine where faith in international justice and the ICC is rapidly dwindling; [...] justice must be both done and seen to be done." Direct information from the Court is seen as crucial to help "manage expectations and address misinformation in a context where there is either a vacuum of information or active efforts by some to promote inaccurate information."

In 2021, FIDH and No Peace Without Justice published a [report on the outreach activities at the ICC](#) and ongoing challenges in effectively communicating with victims. The report included recommendations on how to enhance the OTP's outreach strategy, based on consultations with 38 CSOs. While there have been notable efforts made since then, it is concerning that many of the recommendations put forward in 2021 have yet to be fully implemented, such as increasing awareness and implementation of the [Guidelines on Intermediaries](#) and the creation of a dedicated communications team within the OTP to increase its outreach with victims and affected communities, leaving victims still facing significant barriers in accessing information about the Court.

The lack of outreach not only denies victims their rights but also risks alienating affected communities, who should be the Court's strongest advocates yet are increasingly losing faith in its ability to deliver justice. This highlights the urgent need for the ICC to prioritise outreach and communication efforts, ensuring victims are informed and meaningfully engaged in the processes that shape their pursuit of justice.

## 2.3 Right to legal representation

Additionally, the Court's support for victims' legal representation remains too limited, especially regarding resources and legal aid during the early stages of proceedings. Victims face limited opportunities to formally participate, as LRVs often lack the necessary funding to conduct essential work during the preliminary and reparations stages. Although the new [Legal Aid Policy \(LAP\)](#) of the ICC adopted by the ASP in 2023 represented a step forward to address this issue by allocating some [resources to early stages of proceedings](#), the LAP has yet to be effectively implemented. Moreover, while early-stage resource allocation is a critical improvement, the allocation of a fixed lump-sum of €30,000 (for all victims per situation and for the duration of this stage) remains insufficient to adequately address the needs of victims in the protracted early stages of proceedings.

Without victim participation, the Court risks not only losing their trust but also missing out on critical evidence and testimonies. Victims who feel supported and understood are often more forthcoming,

providing the Court with more accurate and comprehensive information, ultimately enhancing the quality of the proceedings. However, if the current practice of limiting victims' involvement persists, victims may grow even more disillusioned with the ICC, seeing it as disconnected from their lived realities. This disconnection ultimately threatens not only the Court's reputation but also erodes public confidence in the entire international justice system.

## 2.4 Applying a gender lens and intersectional approach

Despite the alarming rise in conflict-related sexual violence, with the United Nation's 2024 "[Gender Snapshot](#)" reporting 3,688 verified incidents, a staggering 50% increase since 2022, with women and girls comprising 95% of victims, efforts to address these crimes remain inadequate. Limited resources, inconsistent application of gender-sensitive approaches, and insufficient cooperation from ICC member states continue to hinder progress. In this context, failing to recognise and deliver justice for victims of gender-based crimes not only denies them acknowledgement and reparations but also emboldens perpetrators, perpetuates cycles of violence, and undermines trust in the international justice system's ability to confront such atrocities.

The ICC's inconsistent application of a gender lens and intersectional approach was starkly demonstrated in the [Al Hassan judgment](#), where the Court failed to convict the accused of sexual and gender-based crimes. Although it acknowledged these crimes, the Court found insufficient evidence to link them to Al Hassan, leading to his acquittal on charges of forced marriage, sexual slavery, and rape as both crimes against humanity and war crimes. In addition to their [joint judgment](#), each of the three judges issued an individual opinion, highlighting [significant divisions](#) within the Bench. A "[silver lining](#)" emerges in [Judge Prost's](#) individual opinion, who, in contrast to the majority, supported a conviction of gender-based persecution and applied an intersectional approach, stating: "Accordingly the facts of this case support a conviction for the crime against humanity of persecution on the basis of two inseparable grounds: gender and religion. In particular, the conviction for persecution should reflect the multiple and intersecting nature of the targeting of women and girls [...]."

In contrast, [Judge Akane](#) found that rape and forced marriage were "opportunistic" crimes, isolated acts disconnected from the group's broader purpose, and [Judge Mindua](#) controversially argued that duress and mistake of law excused Al Hassan's actions, including gender-based persecution crimes. The ultimate failure in the joint judgment to affirm gender-based persecution as a crime against humanity undermines the Rome Statute's intent to address intersecting vulnerabilities and denies justice to victims, a shortcoming further exacerbated by the widely differing views of the judges, which reflect deep divisions in the interpretation and application of gender and intersectionality within the Court.

When a gender lens and intersectional approach are not properly applied, individuals risk being placed into false identity boxes or reduced to stereotypes, obscuring the full scope of their experiences and the harms they have suffered. For example, investigations into sexual violence have historically focused primarily on women as victims, neglecting the experiences of [men and boys](#) who have also suffered such crimes and failing to recognise broader patterns of gender-based harm. This narrow framing has perpetuated stereotypes, overlooked systemic issues, and led to gaps in justice for many victims. By failing to capture the complexities of intersecting identities, such as gender, ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status, the justice processes can misrepresent the crimes, exclude vulnerable groups, and deliver reparations that do not fully address the harm caused. Such failures undermine victims' trust, the legitimacy of the Court, and the transformative potential of justice to challenge structural inequalities.

### ***How can States Strengthen Victims' Rights?***

To address the restricted opportunities for victims to voice their experiences and protect their interests, FIDH, its members, and partner NGOs have consistently emphasised the need for actionable reforms to protect and strengthen victims' rights. Key recommendations include ensuring victims have consistent and meaningful opportunities to participate throughout all stages of proceedings, establishing clear and standardised modalities for engagement, and enhancing outreach efforts to ensure victims are informed of their rights and avenues for participation. States Parties and ICC officials must also prioritise adequate legal aid to support victims' representatives and actively advocate for victims' rights at every stage of ICC processes.

Recognising the need to strengthen victims' rights, at the ASP session last year [States Parties requested](#) the Court to update its [2012 Victims Strategy](#) to align with the evolving needs and challenges they face. Led by the ICC Registry, this revision process offers a unique opportunity to address the gaps from the 2012 strategy, and have a candid discussion about the current state of victims' rights at the Court and the practical steps needed to uphold them. As part of this effort, the ICC Registry initiated a [consultation process](#) with external stakeholders, including CSOs, publishing an online questionnaire in August 2024 to seek contributions. For the revised strategy to be truly survivor-centred, direct consultations with victims or their representative groups are essential. Although it was not foreseen by the Registry to directly engage victims in the review process, advocacy by NGOs successfully prompted the Registry to incorporate this approach, an important step forward. It is now crucial for the Court and ultimately ICC States Parties to ensure that the revised Victims' Strategy is not just a paper exercise but a practical roadmap for meaningful change. This requires addressing key challenges restricting victims' rights and implementing concrete, measurable steps for improvement.

The Court should also adopt a truly victim-centred approach across all its policies and activities, recognising this as both a moral imperative and as being essential to the Court's integrity. A victim-centred approach ensures that victims' basic legal rights (representation, participation, protection, information, and reparations) are fully upheld. This includes adopting a Court-wide trauma responsive approach, and ensuring their agency (victims' ability to make informed choices and actively participate) is respected throughout proceedings, to ensure the justice process is more inclusive and responsive to their needs. It is important to clearly define a "victim-centred approach", with examples to demonstrate its practical application. Broad terms like "victim-centred" can risk becoming superficial if not clearly defined and grounded in the Court's actual capacity to deliver.

In addition, States should urge the ICC to consistently apply a gender-responsive and intersectional approach in all aspects of its work. Applying this approach throughout ICC cases (from investigations to appeals and reparations proceedings) is critical for ensuring victims' rights are meaningfully upheld, enhancing the accuracy of fact-finding, and addressing the full scope of harm caused by international crimes. As recently highlighted by an OTP representative, this also includes effectively implementing policies, such as the OTP policies on [gender-based crimes](#) and [gender persecution](#), by ensuring planned behaviour change through the dissemination of policies, fostering a community of practice, developing specialised tools and resources, providing technical and institutional support, and investing in training to build capacity for more effective and survivor-centred investigations. Such an approach recognises that individuals experience violence and injustice differently based on intersecting factors like gender, ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status, which influence both the nature of the crimes committed and their impact on victims. By integrating this perspective, the ICC can uncover patterns of violence that might otherwise be overlooked, ensure equitable participation and representation of diverse victims, and deliver reparations that genuinely address the harms experienced, ultimately fostering more comprehensive justice and accountability.

Building on these efforts, a comprehensive gender-responsive approach should be adopted for the entire Court. While the establishment of an [ICC Focal Point for Gender Equality](#) was a positive step, it is insufficient on its own and greater transparency regarding the role and activities of this focal point is needed. Furthermore, proper training on the application of a gender lens should be made mandatory for all new staff, complemented by renewed training for existing staff. Lessons learned from past cases should be documented to inform future practices. The remarkable work carried out by experts, including in publications like [Gender and International Criminal Law](#) and the forthcoming book, [Feminist Judgments: Reimagining the International Criminal Court](#) should serve as valuable resources for the Court. By adopting these measures, the ICC can significantly enhance its commitment to gender justice and effectiveness in addressing gender-based crimes.

In the same vein, FIDH also calls on States to support [Sierra Leone's proposal](#) to amend the Rome Statute to include the slave trade as a crime against humanity and slavery and the slave trade as war crimes. This amendment would fill critical legal and impunity gaps, aligning the Rome Statute more closely with the framework of international law. Moreover, it would also better reflect the lived realities of victims, particularly women and girls who are disproportionately affected by those crimes. It would ensure that acts of sexual violence connected to these crimes are addressed, promoting accountability and reinforcing the ICC's mandate to protect victims' rights and in particular victims of gender-based crimes.

## Recommendations

To uphold victims' Rome Statute rights, FIDH calls on ICC States Parties to:

- **Provide adequate funding for the fulfilment of victims' rights** by ensuring the ICC's annual budget supports essential services, including legal aid, outreach, and victim participation at all stages, and by requiring the Registry to justify these budget requests to guarantee their sufficiency.
- **Prioritise allocating adequate resources to Court-wide outreach**, to ensure not only an adequate budget but also sufficient staffing to manage all situations and to communicate effectively in local languages.
- **Proactively support victims' rights** by actively seeking insights into how victims are impacted by the Court, incorporating their views into ICC processes, and ensuring that the Court's actions are both meaningful and beneficial for victims.
- **Sign cooperation agreements with the ICC on victims and witness protection** with the ICC to facilitate the relocation of victims and witnesses at risk, ensuring their safety and safeguarding their ability to participate in proceedings.
- **Adopt Rome Statute amendments** proposed by Sierra Leone's to include the slave trade as a crime against humanity and as a war crime, ensuring better protection for victims, particularly women and girls disproportionately affected by these crimes.
- **Promote a gender-sensitive intersectional approach** by mandating the consistent application of a gender lens and intersectional analysis across all ICC cases, from investigations to reparations, to ensure equitable representation and address the full scope of harm suffered.
- **Mandate comprehensive training for ICC staff** on victims' rights, with a focus on a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach, complemented by lessons learned from past cases to improve future practices.



### 3. Champion and drive accountability through State cooperation and genuine domestic proceedings

The principles of cooperation and complementarity, enshrined in the Rome Statute, form the foundation of the ICC's system. Cooperation requires States Parties to assist the Court in essential tasks, such as the arrest and surrender of suspects, the identification and freezing of assets, the gathering of evidence, the protection of witnesses, and the facilitation of access to crime scenes. Complementarity, on the other hand, positions the ICC as a court of last resort, intervening only when national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to act. Together, these principles are designed to enable the ICC to collaborate with national legal systems; however, significant challenges remain in achieving their full implementation.

To date, ICC judges have issued 56 public arrest warrants, with at least [20 suspects remaining at large](#), despite the legal obligations of States Parties under the Rome Statute to arrest and surrender them. Non-cooperation hinders the ability of the Court to effectively carry out its mandate and deliver justice to those who need it the most. Without States' cooperation, the ICC cannot function. Most recently, Mongolia refused to execute the ICC arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin during Putin's visit. This non-compliance, despite [calls from civil society urging action](#), highlights the difficulties the ICC faces in enforcing accountability when States Parties fail to fulfil their legal responsibilities. On 24 October 2024, the Pre-Trial Chamber found "[Mongolia failed to fulfil](#) its international obligation towards the Court and towards the international community as a whole to cooperate in the arrest and surrender of Mr Putin," referring the matter to the Assembly of States Parties for further action, and Mongolia is [appealing](#) the decision.

The ICC is equipped to handle only a limited number of cases, leaving States with the critical responsibility to investigate and prosecute the vast majority of international crimes at the domestic level, whether through ordinary jurisdiction, universal jurisdiction, or other forms of extraterritorial jurisdiction. FIDH calls on States to take meaningful action to fulfil the principle of complementarity by leading genuine investigations and prosecutions while actively cooperating with the ICC.

In this context, FIDH welcomes the [historic verdict](#) delivered by Guinean courts in July 2024 in the trial of the 28 September 2009 massacre. Senior officials, including former President Moussa Dadis Camara, were convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 10 years to life. This case demonstrates that, with political commitment, effective complementarity between the ICC and national courts is achievable.

True complementarity requires that national authorities genuinely and effectively investigate and prosecute international crimes, with support of the OTP if needed. However, there is a lack of transparency regarding the closing of investigations and potentially too much deference being given to domestic authorities. Since he took office in 2021, Prosecutor Karim Khan has emphasised cooperation with national authorities more than his predecessors, closing four investigations ([Georgia](#), [Central African Republic II](#), [Kenya](#), and [Uganda](#)) and three preliminary examinations ([Colombia](#), [Bolivia](#), and [Guinea](#)) referring to the principle of complementarity. Prosecutor Khan also expressed his intention to [complete investigative activities in Libya by the end of 2025](#).

While recognising the importance of domestic proceedings, CSOs have expressed concerns that the ICC's withdrawal in some cases may leave victims without viable avenues for justice. These concerns were notably raised in the Libya and Colombia cases where, FIDH, together with the Colectivo de Abogadas y Abogados Jose Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR) [requested](#) the Pre-Trial Chamber to reverse the Prosecutor's decision to close the preliminary examination. While it is critically important for the OTP to support and reinforce national efforts in investigating and prosecuting international crimes, this must not be to the detriment of victims, which is why it is essential for the OTP to ensure that domestic authorities are genuinely carrying out investigations. Reinaldo Villalba Vargas, FIDH Vice-president and President of CAJAR, has stated on this point that "[e]fforts to enhance justice at the domestic level should not exclude that the ICC Prosecutor [continue to diligently investigate](#) alleged atrocities within the Court's jurisdiction."

To address these challenges, this year the OTP launched its first ever [Policy on Complementarity and Cooperation](#), following a [consultation period](#) with CSOs. While the policy [does not integrate CSOs](#) into the planned “Cooperation and Complementarity Forum”, the Policy refers to developing an “enhanced structural dialogue” with civil society, and the OTP held its first “OTP – CSO Structured Dialogue” session in November 2024, as part of the pre-ASP session ICC-NGO Roundtable meetings. During the session, OTP International Cooperation Advisers working in different unified teams, briefed around 50 civil society representatives on their work, and explored ways CSOs can enhance their cooperation with the OTP. While the parameters of this dialogue remain to be clarified for it to be meaningful and respond to the needs expressed by CSOs, it shows promise for enhanced engagement.

Moreover, while FIDH supports the OTP’s efforts to strengthen national investigations, the OTP has yet to clarify how states are selected for support in order to avoid further disparities. This inconsistency raises concerns of fairness and [potential double standards](#) and the need for more transparency in how complementarity is applied. The new policy lacks specific benchmarks and deadlines for states to show progress in investigations, which risks national authorities misusing the principle of complementarity. Finally, there is a need for a concrete roadmap and regular reviews to ensure the policy’s effectiveness. Without clear milestones, regular progress updates, and accountability measures from the OTP to monitor its implementation, the policy risks remaining theoretical rather than delivering any real, practical impact.

## Recommendations

To enhance cooperation and complementarity, FIDH calls on ICC State Parties to:

- **Actively cooperate with the Court** by providing access to information and territory, executing arrest warrants, transferring suspects, complying with cooperation agreements, and supporting the Court’s mandate publicly.
- **Execute all outstanding ICC arrest warrants for individuals on their territory**, in accordance with Rome Statute obligations.
- **Lead genuine domestic investigations and prosecutions** of international crimes in line with the principle of complementarity.
- **Advocate for greater transparency** by urging the ICC to clearly communicate the reasons and justifications for closing investigations.
- **Ensure meaningful engagement with civil society** by integrating CSOs into decision-making forums such as the Cooperation and Complementarity Forum.
- **Urge the OTP to strengthen its Policy on Complementarity and Cooperation** by establishing clear benchmarks, timelines, and criteria for national accountability efforts.
- **Request regular, detailed and public updates from the OTP** on the implementation of its Policy on Complementarity and Cooperation, including progress reviews and milestones.

## 4. FIDH activities in 2024

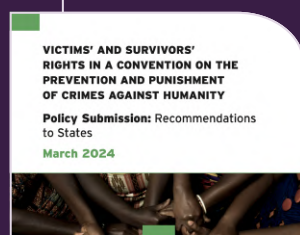
This year marked the successful completion of the first year of the “Global Initiative Against Impunity for International Crimes and Serious Human Rights Violations: Making Justice Work” (GIAI), a programme funded by the European Union. Led by FIDH, GIAI is implemented by a consortium of nine organisations, including the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC), Redress, Civil Rights Defenders, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), Impunity Watch (IW), Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), TRIAL International, and Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ). Two associate partners, the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), also contribute to the programme. GIAI focuses on empowering victims and civil society to actively shape inclusive justice and accountability processes, while strengthening accountability frameworks and systems to fight impunity through dialogue, advocacy, and awareness-raising activities. Over the past year, the consortium has been actively collaborating on a wide range of activities.

The launch of the GIAI also made possible the reconvening of the Victims’ Rights Working Group (VRWG), led by the CICC, FIDH and Redress. This group serves as a vital platform for national and international victim-focused civil society organisations to share information, discuss and address important legal challenges and practical difficulties in implementing victims’ rights at the ICC. By fostering an organised and collaborative environment, the VRWG effectively fills a critical gap to advocate for the respect and implementation of victims’ rights in ICC proceedings.

# JUSTICE IN ACTION

## Highlights of FIDH Advocacy in 2024

Policy submission urging states to back a Crimes Against Humanity Convention.



27 MARCH

FIDH's International Board adopts Resolution on FIDH's position on the recognition of the crime of gender apartheid.

28 MARCH

Release of the 2024 Universal Jurisdiction Annual Review.



15 APRIL

FIDH Publishes Q&A on the ICC OTP's New Approach to Complementarity and Cooperation.

26 APRIL

4 JUNE



Launch of the "Global Initiative Against Impunity for International Crimes and Serious Human Rights Violations: Making Justice Work", a 4-year civil-society project led by FIDH in partnership with 10 international NGOs.

30 MAY



FIDH co-hosts the event "Victims' Rights in Early ICC Proceedings: Stopping the Backslide" at the International Criminal Court, addressing regression in victims' rights during the initial stages of ICC proceedings and exploring solutions.

24 MAY



The Paris Criminal Court convicts three Syrian officials for complicity in crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Debbagh case. FIDH and its partners initiated the lawsuit, with an FIDH lawyer representing the Dabbagh family.



6 JUNE

25 JUNE



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The Paris Court of Appeal denies functional immunity to Adib Mayaleh, ex-Governor of Syria's Central Bank, under investigation for crimes against humanity and war crimes. FIDH, a civil party in the case, welcomes this landmark ruling.



FIDH submits an Article 15 Communication to the ICC OTP on the Crime Against Humanity of Persecution in the form of hate speech against Ukrainians.



FIDH and its member, the Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH), submit an Art. 15 Communication to the OTP on Crimes Against Humanity in Peru.

6 DECEMBER

5 NOVEMBER

9 OCTOBER



FIDH will launch the report "Civil Society and the ICC: Pathways to Collaborative and Genuine Engagement", highlighting civil society's crucial role in advancing accountability for Rome Statute crimes and supporting justice for victims.



In Yerevan, FIDH co-organises the roundtable "Armenia and the ICC: What's Next After Ratifying the Rome Statute?" featuring interventions by ICC President Judge Tomoko Akane and ASP President Päivi Kaukoranta.



© Safin HAMID / AFP

Sabri Essid faces charges in Paris for crimes against humanity and genocide against Yazidis in Syria. FIDH, alongside member organisations, the French Ligue des droits de l'Homme LDH and Kinyat, actively contributes to the investigation and supports Yazidi victims in the case.



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# Keep your eyes open

**fidh**

**Establishing the facts** - Investigative and trial observation missions

**Supporting civil society** - Training and exchange

**Mobilizing the international community** - Advocacy before intergovernmental bodies

**Informing and reporting** - Mobilizing public opinion

**For FIDH, transforming societies relies on the work of local actors.**

The Worldwide Movement for Human Rights acts at national, regional and international levels in support of its member and partner organizations to address human rights abuses and consolidate democratic processes. Its work is directed at States and those in power, such as armed opposition groups and multinational corporations.

Its primary beneficiaries are national human rights organizations who are members of the Movement, and through them, the victims of human rights violations. FIDH also cooperates with other local partner organizations and actors of change.

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FIDH is an  
international human rights  
NGO  
federating 188 organizations  
from 116 countries

**fidh**

## ABOUT FIDH

FIDH takes action for the protection of victims of human rights violations, for the prevention of violations and to bring perpetrators to justice.

### **A broad mandate**

FIDH works for the respect of all the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

### **A universal movement**

FIDH was established in 1922, and today unites 188 member organizations in 116 countries around the world. FIDH coordinates and supports their activities and provides them with a voice at the international level.

### **An independent organization**

Like its member organizations, FIDH is not linked to any party or religion and is independent of all governments.